



# **The Road Less Traveled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values, and Spiritual Growth**

*M. Scott Peck*

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## **The Road Less Traveled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values, and Spiritual Growth M. Scott Peck**

Perhaps no book in this generation has had a more profound impact on our intellectual and spiritual lives than *The Road Less Traveled*. With sales of more than seven million copies in the United States and Canada, and translations into more than twenty-three languages, it has made publishing history, with more than ten years on the *New York Times* bestseller list.

Now, with a new Introduction by the author, written especially for this twenty-fifth anniversary deluxe trade paperback edition of the all-time national bestseller in its field, M. Scott Peck explains the ideas that shaped this book and that continue to influence an ever-growing audience of readers.

Written in a voice that is timeless in its message of understanding, *The Road Less Traveled* continues to help us explore the very nature of loving relationships and leads us toward a new serenity and fullness of life. It helps us learn how to distinguish dependency from love; how to become a more sensitive parent; and ultimately how to become one's own true self.

Recognizing that, as in the famous opening line of his book, "Life is difficult" and that the journey to spiritual growth is a long one, Dr. Peck never bullies his readers, but rather guides them gently through the hard and often painful process of change toward a higher level of self-understanding.

## **The Road Less Traveled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values, and Spiritual Growth Details**

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## Cole says

I initially picked up this book because I was told that this author was the inspiration for a women's retreat I went to a couple years ago. However, I found no connection to the theme of the retreat and this book.

Initially I found Peck's theories on discipline appealing. He promoted fundamental ideas of Buddhism, such as life is suffering and only through acceptance of that suffering can we truly live and be free of it. He believes that the pursuit of the truth regardless of the pain involved is fundamental to mental health, and that only through valuing ourselves can we value life and love those around us.

However, while reading examples of cases that Peck has worked on in psychotherapy I felt that his confidence in his prognosis's and what he thought his clients ought to do was rather pretentious. Furthermore as I read I got the suspicion that Peck was rather homophobic or at least that he thought homosexuality was a sign of poor mental health. First of all, in all his discussions on love and relationships not once does he relate his theories in the context of a homosexual relationship. Second he uses examples of actions that his clients took to move toward better mental health including an example of a young homosexual boy summoning the strength to ask a girl out. I was starting to really dislike this author at this point, but it was the next few pages that killed it for me.

Halfway through the book where Peck is saying that love is discipline, he thought it appropriate to use slavery as a metaphor. He states,

"While one should not be slave to one's feelings, self discipline does not mean the squashing of one's feelings into nonexistence. I frequently tell my patients that their feelings are their slaves and that the art of self discipline is like the art of slaving owning"

I can't believe he refers to slave owning as an "art". He continues,

"First of all, one's feelings are the source of one's energy; they provide the horsepower, or slave power, that makes it possible for us to accomplish the task of living. Since they work for us, we should treat them with respect."

It gets worse,

" One type of slave-owner does not discipline his slaves, gives them no structure, sets them no limits, provides them with no direction and does not make it clear whose the boss. What happens, of course, is that in due time his slaves stop working and begin moving into the mansion, raiding the liquor cabinet and breaking the furniture, and soon the slave owner finds he is the slave of his slaves!"

Scott Peck author...phycologist...homophobe....racist.....got it. I'm done with this book!

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### **Jonathan Ridenour says**

This book is by now a classic in the field of psychology. Yet, it's written for a mainstream audience and goes through some of the basic tenets of psychological theory (e.g. attachment, individuation, boundaries, delayed gratification) but does so through the lens of spiritual growth. Peck is an excellent writer and fine therapist who is sensitive to the issues of spirituality. The case examples and stories in the book really bring his concepts and ideas together. This is a book that I would recommend to therapy clients who are wanting to understand how their religious beliefs are inline with the goals of psychotherapy.

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### **Gina Marcellin says**

This book is second only to the bible to me. It teaches you what love is. What love is not. Why old fashioned values like honesty, hard work, discipline and integrity are important. Every person should read it. This book should be required reading in high school or college.

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### **Julia says**

I cherish this book and give praise to Scott Peck for writing this masterpiece, a wealth of knowledge and wisdom.

The first time I read it I was in my early 30's. It changed my life, encouraged me to live authentically and with courage. When you're raising a family one needs to follow their conscience and make tough decisions. Peck teaches and encourages this process. I have followed up with Peck's subsequent books in the last few years.

I recommend this to any adult searching for a better life but particularly if you're raising a family.

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### **Martina Röll says**

Probably the most important book on love, psychological and spiritual development that I have ever read. Clear, straightforward, concise, very accessible. Don't be put off by the criticism of the numerous references to "God" and "grace" in the later chapters: I found them useful and "open" (in the sense that "God" might be substituted by "universe", "energy", "oneness" or whatever you might want to call it. There is no need to believe in a deity.) If you do find the reference to concepts of oneness or "God" problematic, just read the first parts and leave the rest for another time. It's well worth it.

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### **M. says**

Kitap ruhsal açmazlar mı oldu? U bir dönemde bana önerildi? İ için tüm kitaplar? N önüne yerle? Tirip okumaya ba? Lad? M. Kitap? N ilk bölümünü bana gerçekten çok iyi geldi. Zaten? U cümleyle ba? L? Yor: "Ya? Am zordur,

*Bu yüce bir gerçektir."*

Bu bölümde savundu?u ve temellendirdi?i temel fikirler ?unlar;

- 1) Ki?ili?in tekamül etmesi gerekti?i, bunun da disiplinle mümkün olaca??.
- 2) Gerçe?e sad?k bir ya?am?n aç?k ve dürüstlükle sürdürülece?i bunun da ki?inin ba??n?n dik ve özgüveninin tam olmas?n? sa?layaca??;
- 3) Gerçekd??? bir yol haritas?n?n; masallar?n ki?iyi buhrana sürükleyece?i. Bu manada yol haritas?n?n önemli oldu?u.

Bu fikirler oldukça i?e yarar. Bunlar?n d???nda pek çok fikir daha edindim. ?kinci bölüm olan Sevgi de fena de?ildi ama di?er bölümlerin "olmasa da olur" hatta "olmasa daha iyi olur" diye dü?ündürdü?ünü söyleyebilirim. Zira son bölümde Hristiyanl?k propagandas? sezdim. E?er bu bölümler olmasayd? puan?m 4 y?ld?z olurdu.

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### **Jennie says**

I read this book to make my mom happy. Her church book group was reading it, and she got all stoked about it after reading the first section. It was a fairly bland combination of basic common sense (self-discipline is good, laziness is bad), pseudo-spiritual psychobabble (your unconscious mind is God!), and the occasional moral zinger (open marriage is the only real form of marriage). Overall, I was unimpressed, but I wasn't begging the Lord for the 6 hours of my life back, either. I never even asked my mom what she thought of the book after the first part. I suppose that would be a good thing to do. I love my mom.

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### **Jamie says**

A very insightful book authored by a psychologist/psychiatrist who reveals the secrets to fulfilling, healthy, meaningful and lasting relationships. It really makes you see yourself and others in a different light, as well as words and concepts we think we understand. His hallmark argument is that we so often view love as a noun instead of a verb... as something that just happens to us or doesn't happen to us, instead of an ongoing task we must work at...that work, that action-is love. In fact, something I clearly remember is his point that when people feel as though they've "fallen out of love", it is then that the opportunity for true love to grow is at its greatest. Not at all written in a preachy, self-help sort of way. It's very interesting, full of a lot of great anecdotes.

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### **Laura says**

"Dr." Peck's first doorstop. Inexplicably, this sorry waste of time and paper remained on the NYT Bestseller list for something like ten years. (I don't know why I'm surprised, actually -- this is the same country that elected George W. Bush twice, not to mention the vulgar talking yam who now sits in the Oval Office.) If you were unfortunate enough to buy this, or have it given to you as a gift, do yourself a favor now: put this one the shelf right beside that other pop-pseudo-psychology piece of shit *Michelle Remembers*. Leave them both within spitting distance, and leave room next to them for anything written by "Dr." Fool. Do not open any of them, ever.

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## Sanjay Gautam says

The author has delved deep into, with profound insights, on what really causes unhappiness in our life. He asserts that it is precisely in avoiding our problems and hurdles that we suffer in our life; it is the pain and suffering caused by difficulties in life that we have to meet in order to grow mentally and spiritually. We cannot solve life's problems except by solving them.

The following were the key-takeaways:

*\* LIFE IS DIFFICULT. This is a great truth, one of the greatest truths. It is a great truth because once we truly see this truth, we transcend it. Once we truly know that life is difficult--once we truly understand and accept it--then life is no longer difficult. Because once it is accepted, the fact that life is difficult no longer matters.*

*\* Without discipline we can solve nothing. With only some discipline we can solve only some problems. With total discipline we can solve all problems.*

*\* A person who has the ability to delay gratification has the key to psychological maturity, whereas impulsiveness is a mental habit that, in denying opportunities to experience pain, creates neuroses.*

*\* Most large problems we have are the result of not facing up to earlier, smaller problems, of failing to be 'dedicated to the truth'. The great mistake most people make is believing that problems will go away of their own accord.*

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## Thom Dunn says

Peck begins well, citing the first of Buddhism's Four Noble Truths, "Life is Suffering". And what we all need is a discipline instilled in our childhood by a love which teaches us to face our problems instead of ducking them in procrastination, denial, and the like. Sounds fine, but there seems to this reader to be something missing....a mythic element, perhaps. Life will be beautiful if only we get ourselves under control and work hard, etcetera, etcetera.... It feels to me as if all wonder has been replaced by a kind of Victorian stoicism, a Protestant ethic of duty and responsibility....Do your homework BEFORE you watch TV, for example. This is maturity, getting rid of the misery first before your play.... But what of the math geek who loves homework ? The great arc of Peck's undertaking, what he calls more than once "the only way to live" seems after a while to devolve into the same shoulder-to-the-wheel Volga boatman's creed delivered in kind language that all our teachers back in the Eisenhower 50's kept hammering us with. What about dreams, Mr. Peck ? What of the libido ? It may be the screwball Celt in me that fears coming to the end of my life with all my homework done but with, Starry Night, say, unpainted.

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## **Birdie Passaro says**

An extraordinary book about Life and the art of Living. It was the most complete and indepth book about personal development from which one become much more aware of the nature of all kinds of relationships. This book will help to shape your vision of Life!

Please, just read it. Your perspective about things will never be the same. Notable, indeed!

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## **Murray Crowe says**

The author endeared me early on to his obvious skill, professionalism and empathy with his patients. The first part was fairly entertaining, with the right amount of insight and entertainment from Peck's own therapy sessions. I could identify with the people and situations and could pause at times for self reflection. There was a challenge to personal change as Peck built his case for seeking maturity and using therapy to achieve that end.

Peck is strongest as a therapist. His insight is keen, and his deductive/intuitive approach makes sense. But he's also rather ambitious. The middle section attempted to tie a loose story into a cohesive thesis on what Peck personally believed ought to happen in life. It went from being passive-objective to prescriptive-subjective. Eventually he was stretching into subjects somewhat beyond his grasp.

His forays into philosophy, theology and neuroscience didn't lend much credibility to his arguments. The final part of the book was clumsy, contradictory and seemed somewhat outdated. The chapter on synchronicity/serendipity was particularly trudgeworthy. He dragged psychology out of science and into mysticism. Which is fine if you're a fan of Oprah and Chopra. I'm not.

My journey down the Road Less Travelled started out on a sunny day with a compass and small, promising path. It ended with me being dragged down a dark alley-way by a man with a white stick.

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## **Mike says**

This book starts out extremely engaging and helpful in nature - worthy of four or five stars. But midway through Peck reveals his psychology of teaching his patients and readers to become like God. While I'm certain he means no malice in this objective, he seems ignorant of negative psychological aspects of this philosophy. Indeed, the book "Toxic Faith" cites "You can become God" as one of the twenty-one Toxic Beliefs of a Toxic Faith (p.98). Having observed the deleterious effect of this belief among the Mormon population I find Peck's thesis professionally reckless regardless of the popularity of his message.

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## **Chris Wolfe says**

It gets four stars for the simple truth of the opening lines:

"Life is difficult. This is a great truth, one of the greatest truths. It is a great truth because once we truly see this truth, we transcend it. Once we truly know that life is difficult--once we truly understand and accept it--

then life is no longer difficult. Because once it is accepted, the fact that life is difficult no longer matters."

It amazes me how much damage I have done by expecting life to be something other than difficult and how much easier my life is when I accept that it is difficult and that I will be uncomfortable.

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